

## **Support for *C. cactorum* Outreach and Cooperative Solutions by International Organizations**

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*“The North American Plant Protection Organization (NAPPO) is a Regional Plant Protection Organization created under the authority of Article VIII of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. NAPPO operates according to a Cooperative Agreement signed by representatives of Canada, the United States of America and Mexico on October 13th, 1976, in order to encourage cooperation in the field of plant protection. Accordingly, NAPPO is accountable to the Minister/Secretary of Agriculture in NAPPO member countries.*

*NAPPO’s mission is to coordinate the efforts among Canada, the United States and Mexico to protect their plant resources from the entry, establishment and spread of regulated plant pests, while facilitating intra/ interregional trade.*

*Given the importance of *C. cactorum* to Mexico and the US and in line with its mission statement, NAPPO is providing coordination, administration and translation support for the *C.cactorum* project. In July, 2007, Dr. Walther Enkerlin will begin working for NAPPO as its Technical Director and he will be the ongoing liaison between NAPPO and Mexican and US experts.”*

The cactus moth, *Cactoblastis cactorum*, has become a serious threat to the high diversity of native and cultivated cactus pear species, *Opuntia* cacti, around the world. Its presence represents an imminent threat to cultivated and wild cacti and its ecosystem in Southwestern USA, Mexico, and Central America. The threat might spread to other regions of the world where *Opuntia* cacti also plays a valuable role in subsistence and commercial agriculture, in maintaining the ecological balance of unique ecosystems, in combating desertification and in soil conservation, in particular in Northern Africa.

Given the seriousness of the problem, in 2002 the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) upon request from the Mexican Government, approved a Technical Cooperation Project “Reserve Fund Project”. The objectives of this Project were: (1) to conduct feasibility assessments on the economic, social and ecological impact of the establishment of *C. cactorum* in Southern USA and in Mexico; (2) to prepare public information material in support of an awareness campaign that would be launched by the Mexican Government and (3) to develop the capacity to react to a cactus moth outbreak by training Mexican staff in charge of plant protection in South Africa and in Florida, USA, where this invasive pest is well established.

As a result, a feasibility study was conducted which led to a “Preliminary Assessment of the Potential Impacts and Risks of the Invasive Cactus Moth, *Cactoblastis cactorum*, in the USA and Mexico”. For the purposes of supporting a wider awareness campaign, a book entitled “The Biology, History, Threats, Surveillance and Control of the Cactus Moth, *C. cactorum*” was published, and a video entitled “The Cactus Moth, *C. cactorum*, an Economic, Social and Ecological Threat” was produced. In addition a number of professional staff of the Mexican

Plant Protection Directorate were trained in South Africa and Florida, USA. The feasibility assessment and the preparation and distribution of public awareness material assisted Mexico in its national campaign for preventing the introduction and establishment of the cactus moth. Stakeholders, including the prickly pear industry, the state's plant protection organizations and a number of NGOs such as Greenpeace and Nature Conservancy are actively collaborating with Mexico's Ministry of Agriculture. As a result of training, plant protection staff is actively involved in an ongoing national detection programme that is conducted in strategic areas considered to be of high risk.

In 2004, under the framework of the IAEA project, a Regional Cactus Moth Workshop was conducted in Mexico City which paved the way to a Cooperative Agreement between the Plant Protection General Directorate (DGSV-SENASICA) of the Government of Mexico and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Under this Cooperative Agreement both countries are actively collaborating in a prevention and containment program and in developing the phytosanitary measures to be able to deal with this exotic invasive pest including the development and validation of the sterile insect technique.

If an outbreak of cactus moth occurs in the Southwestern USA or Mexico, the plant protection authorities have the capacity to react, control and contain the outbreak, as has been demonstrated in a recent outbreak in Isla Mujeres Island located in the state of Quintana Roo, Mexico.